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021546Z May 01

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	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	STR-00	TRSE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
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SUBJECT: MDC CAMPAIGNING ACTIVELY BUT QUIETLY FOR PRESIDENCY, BUT
UNSURE HOW IT WOULD REACT TO MUGABE VICTORY
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REF: A) HARARE 1247 B) HARARE 930

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARL IRVING. REASONS: 1.5
(B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) HAS STRENGTHENED ITS INTERNAL STRUCTURES AND PUT IN PLACE A RIGOROUS POLICY-VETTING PROCESS. THE LACK OF ADEQUATE RESOURCES, HOWEVER, CONTINUES TO POSE A PROBLEM, EXACERBATED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO GIVE THE MDC FUNDS TO WHICH IT IS LEGALLY ENTITLED AND BY THE PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION PROHIBITING POLITICAL PARTIES FROM RECEIVING FOREIGN FUNDING. THE MDC WILL TRY TO PLAY ABOVEBOARD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BUT LIKELY WILL HAVE TO ENGAGE IN A BIT OF "CREATIVE FINANCING." IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID PROVOKING ZANU-PF, THE MDC IS CAMPAIGNING FOR THE 2002 PRESIDENCY ACTIVELY BUT QUIETLY. IT IS HOLDING FEWER LARGE RALLIES AND IS SENDING SMALL TEAMS TO RURAL AREAS AROUND THE COUNTRY TO CAMPAIGN DOOR-TO-DOOR. THE OPPOSITION PARTY HAS NOT AGREED HOW TO REACT IN THE EVENT THAT PRESIDENT MUGABE WINS AN ILLEGITIMATE ELECTION, AN INCREASINGLY LIKELY SCENARIO. END SUMMARY.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES

2. (C) DURING THE PAST TWO MONTHS, THE MDC HAS TAKEN STEPS TO STRENGTHEN ITS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES. ISAAC MAPOSA, WHO LAST YEAR LED THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY'S OPPOSITION TO THE
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GOVERNMENT'S DRAFT CONSTITUTION, JOINED THE MDC IN EARLY MARCH AS ITS NATIONAL COORDINATOR. MAPOSA TOLD POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF ON APRIL 25 THAT, WHEN HE BEGAN WORK, HE WAS SURPRISED BY THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN THE MDC'S OFFICES WITHOUT CLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES. HE FIRED A NUMBER OF PEOPLE AND HAS CONCENTRATED ON DEVELOPING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS FOR THOSE WHO REMAIN. IN ADDITION, HE HAS WORKED TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY AMONG THE OPPOSITION PARTY'S TEN DEPARTMENTS, BY HELPING DEPARTMENT HEADS DEVELOP REALISTIC WORK PLANS AND REQUIRING REGULAR ACTIVITY REPORTS. IN ADDITION, MAPOSA EMPHASIZED THAT HE DOES NOT SET THE MDC'S POLICY AGENDA. RATHER, HE SEES HIMSELF MORE AS A FACILITATOR, WHOSE ROLE IS TO BRING TOGETHER THE PARTY LEADERSHIP WHEN IMPORTANT ISSUES MUST BE DISCUSSED AND THEN IMPLEMENTS THEIR DECISIONS.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

3. (C) ACCORDING TO MAPOSA, THE MDC HAS CONTINUED TO ORGANIZE REGULAR RETREATS TO DEVELOP THE PARTY'S POLICY POSITIONS. IN JANUARY, THE PARTY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,

AND PROVINCIAL LEADERS HELD A RETREAT TO DISCUSS LAND AND THE ECONOMY AND, IN MARCH, HELD ONE ON HEALTH AND EDUCATION. ON MAY 5, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PLANS TO MEET TO ENDORSE THE POSITIONS DEVELOPED AND AGREE ON AN APPROACH FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION. A MID-MAY RETREAT HAS BEEN ORGANIZED TO DEFINE THE PARTY'S IDEOLOGY, PARTICULARLY WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT. AGREEMENT ON IDEOLOGY AND THE DETAILS, MAPOSA NOTED, WILL HELP ENSURE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSISTENT POLICIES AND A CONSISTENT MESSAGE. THE MID-MAY MEETING WILL ALSO FOCUS ON CRAFTING AN EFFECTIVE DIPLOMATIC APPROACH TOWARD THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

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MEDIA STRATEGY

14. (C) THE MDC HAS IN RECENT WEEKS MADE NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENTS IN USING THE PRESS TO GET OUT ITS MESSAGE, DUE IN LARGE MEASURE TO INTENSIVE TRAINING -- PROVIDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE (IRI) IN EARLY APRIL IN BOTSWANA -- ON MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SPEAKING. THE RECENT HIRING OF A MEDIA RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL HAS ALSO HAD AN OBVIOUS POSITIVE IMPACT. MAPOSA AGREED THAT THE PARTY'S MEDIA PERSON IS GOOD, BUT HE IS THE ONLY OFFICER IN A DEPARTMENT THAT NEEDS AT LEAST FOUR PEOPLE TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE. MAPOSA INDICATED THAT THE PARTY PLANS TO USE THE PRESS EVEN MORE, AND HAS BEGUN TO ORGANIZE PUBLIC EVENTS AROUND THE MEDIA ATTENTION THEY ARE LIKELY TO GENERATE. (COMMENT: MDC PRESIDENT MORGAN TSVANGIRAI'S RECENT VISIT TO THE MASS GRAVES OF VICTIMS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S 1980'S BRUTAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST DISSIDENTS IS A CASE IN POINT. THE VISIT DEMONSTRATED LEADERSHIP ON A PAINFUL, UNRESOLVED ISSUE ABOUT WHICH GOVERNMENT REMAINS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE, GENERATED SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE PRESS COVERAGE AND HELPED CONSOLIDATE TSVANGIRAI'S ALREADY STRONG SUPPORT IN MATABELELAND. END COMMENT.)

FINANCING

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15. (C) SECURING ADEQUATE RESOURCES CONTINUES TO POSE A SERIOUS OBSTACLE FOR THE MDC, A TASK MADE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT BY PARLIAMENT'S RECENT PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION PROHIBITING DIRECT AND INDIRECT FOREIGN FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES (REF A). IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET FULFILLED ITS COMMITMENT -- MADE IN LATE FEBRUARY -- TO RELEASE TO THE MDC WITHIN 30 DAYS 47 MILLION ZIMBABWEAN DOLLARS (NOW APPROXIMATELY U.S. \$470,000) TO WHICH IT IS LEGALLY ENTITLED, BY VIRTUE OF ITS STRONG SHOWING IN THE JUNE 2000 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION. INTER ALIA, THE NEW POLITICAL PARTIES FINANCING LAW PRECLUDES THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR PARTY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS IRI'S RECENT WORKSHOP IN BOTSWANA DESCRIBED IN PARA 5. NGOS AND DONORS ARE UNSURE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE NEW LEGISLATION ON MANY OF THEIR ACTIVITIES. IRI REGIONAL DIRECTOR KATHI WALTHER TOLD POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF ON APRIL 30 THAT HER ORGANIZATION WOULD CONTINUE TO OFFER SIMILAR TRAINING, BUT LIKELY WOULD HAVE TO PROVIDE IT OUTSIDE OF ZIMBABWE. SOME DONORS HAVE MADE HURRIED CAPITAL INVESTMENTS OR DEPOSITED

MONEY IN FOREIGN BANK ACCOUNTS IN ANTICIPATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S SIGNATURE OF THE BILL, WHICH IS SILENT ON THE QUESTION OF PENALTIES FOR DONORS.

16. (C) MDC MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT DAVID COLTART TOLD POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF RECENTLY THAT THE LAW WAS INTENDED TO CRUSH THE OPPOSITION PARTY, AND MIGHT HAVE THE EFFECT OF DRIVING THE MDC UNDERGROUND. IN THE MEANTIME, THE MDC WOULD SEEK TO SIGN COMMERCIAL LOAN AGREEMENTS -- WHICH ARE NOT PROHIBITED -- WITH DONOR NATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS. COLTART INDICATED THAT THE PARTY PLANNED TO CHALLENGE THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE BILL, BECAUSE IT VIOLATES THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PREVENTS ZIMBABWEAN CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD FROM CONTRIBUTING TO POLITICAL

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PARTIES. ISAAC MAPOSA EMPHASIZED THAT THE MDC WOULD TRY TO PLAY ABOVEBOARD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BUT HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PARTY INEVITABLY WOULD HAVE TO ENGAGE IN "CREATIVE FINANCING." ONE OPTION THE MDC WAS EXPLORING WAS TO ASK FOREIGN DONORS TO DEPOSIT FUNDS IN OVERSEAS ACCOUNTS BELONGING TO LOCAL ZIMBABWEAN COMPANIES, WHICH COULD IN TURN MAKE OSTENSIBLY "LOCAL" CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE OPPOSITION PARTY. IN ADDITION, JOHN MAKUMBE, A POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE, PRESIDENT OF TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL-ZIMBABWE, AND REGULAR ADVISOR TO THE MDC LEADERSHIP, IS PRESSING THE OPPOSITION PARTY TO ESTABLISH ITS OWN OFFSHORE BANK ACCOUNTS IN ORDER TO FACILITATE FOREIGN DONATIONS.

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

17. (C) THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE 2002 PRESIDENTIAL VOTE HAS BEGUN IN EARNEST. ZANU-PF, THROUGH ITS GANGSTER MILITIA OF WAR VETERANS AND THUGS FOR HIRE, HAS CONTINUED ITS INTIMIDATION OF RESIDENTS IN RURAL AREAS AND HIGH-DENSITY SUBURBS, AND RECENTLY EXPANDED ITS TERROR CAMPAIGN TO URBAN AREAS, WHERE IT IS TARGETTING COMPANIES AND NGOS SUSPECTING OF SUPPORTING THE OPPOSITION. THE MDC IS CAMPAIGNING ACTIVELY AS WELL, BUT HAS OPTED FOR A LOW-KEY, NON-CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH. MAKUMBE POINTED OUT THAT THE MDC IS STRONGER THAN IT WAS A YEAR AGO, BUT IT REMAINS FRAGILE BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY HOPE FOR MOST ZIMBABWEANS OF A BETTER LIFE. IF THE PARTY PUSHES TOO HARD FOR CHANGE, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SIMPLY SHUT IT DOWN AND PROHIBIT ANY FURTHER OPPOSITION POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THAT IS PRECISELY WHY, ACCORDING TO MAPOSA, THE MDC IS ORGANIZING FEWER LARGE RALLIES -- WHICH WOULD ATTRACT ZANU-PF'S ATTENTION AND INVITE CONFRONTATION. INSTEAD, THE MDC IS SENDING SMALL TEAMS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY TO CAMPAIGN DOOR-TO-DOOR. THE TEAMS ARE

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ADVISING PEOPLE TO DO EVERYTHING NECESSARY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES -- BY AVOIDING CONFRONTATION WITH THE RULING PARTY AND TO ATTEND ZANU-PF RALLIES AND WEAR ZANU-PF T-SHIRTS IF THEY MUST. THE MDC IS EXPENDING SIGNIFICANT EFFORT -- PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS -- TO CONVINCE VOTERS THAT THEIR BALLOT IS SECRET, DESPITE ZANU-PF'S CLAIMS TO THE CONTRARY. THE OPPOSITION PARTY ALSO HAS BEGUN TO DISTRIBUTE PAMPHLETS IN RURAL AREAS LAYING OUT ITS POSITIONS ON KEY ISSUES.

18. (C) THE MDC LEADERSHIP HAS NOT AGREED HOW IT WOULD RESPOND IN THE EVENT PRESIDENT MUGABE WINS A FRAUDULENT ELECTION, AN OUTCOME MANY OBSERVERS CONSIDER INCREASINGLY LIKELY. ASKED HOW THE PARTY WOULD REACT IF MUGABE STEALS THE ELECTION, MAPOSA SEEMED TAKEN ABACK AND DEFENSIVE. AFTER A LONG PAUSE, HE ACKNOWLEDGED WEAKLY ONLY THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME INTERNAL DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE. HE SAID THE PARTY HAS BEEN WORKING WITH KEY REGIONAL PLAYERS -- SOUTH AFRICA AND BOTSWANA, IN PARTICULAR -- TO PRESS MUGABE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ENSURING THAT THE ELECTION IS "AS FREE AND FAIR AS IT CAN BE." MAPOSA ALSO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THE UN MIGHT PROVIDE OR COORDINATE THE PROVISION OF ELECTION MONITORS, AND INDICATED THAT TSVANGIRAI MAY SEEK A MEETING WITH KOFI ANNAN TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE

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IN AN UPCOMING VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES.

19. (C) MAKUMBE AGREED THAT AN ILLEGITIMATE MUGABE VICTORY IS THE LIKELIEST SCENARIO IN 2002. THE MDC'S INCLINATION IN SUCH AN

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EVENT, HE SAID, WAS TO "SCREAM TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY," AN
APPROACH THAT WOULD NOT BE PARTICULARLY PRODUCTIVE. MAKUMBE HAS
INSTEAD URGED TSVANGIRAI AND OTHERS IN THE PARTY TO BE PREPARED TO
WORK WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN ORGANIZING MASS ACTION TO PROTEST THE
OUTCOME. MOST ZIMBABWEANS, MAKUMBE PREDICTED, WOULD BE VERY ANGRY
IN THE EVENT OF A MUGABE VICTORY, AND THE MDC MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO
PREVENT THE OUTBREAK OF BLOODY CONFRONTATIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY.

COMMENT

10. (C) THE INTERNAL RESTRUCTURING AND BETTER USE OF THE MEDIA HAVE
MADE THE MDC A STRONGER, MORE EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION. IN ADDITION,
THE MDC REMAINS OVERWHELMINGLY POPULAR IN URBAN AREAS AND APPEARS
TO BE MAKING INROADS IN SOME RURAL DISTRICTS, JUDGING FROM THE
INCREASE IN ATTENDANCE AT MANY OF THE PARTY'S RALLIES. THE
LEADERSHIP OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY, HOWEVER, IS MAKING A BIG
MISTAKE IN ASSUMING THAT THAT POPULARITY WILL TRANSLATE INTO
ELECTORAL TRIUMPH IN 2002. MORGAN TSVANGIRAI WOULD ALMOST
CERTAINLY WIN AN ELECTION THAT IS CLOSE TO FREE AND FAIR, BUT
PRESIDENT MUGABE HAS STATED EXPLICITLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS -- MOST
RECENTLY IN PUBLIC REMARKS ON ZIMBABWE'S INDEPENDENCE DAY ON APRIL
18 -- THAT HE WILL NEVER ALLOW THE MDC TO ASSUME POWER. IT IS
TIME FOR THE MDC TO TAKE MUGABE AT HIS WORD, AND TO BEGIN TO DO
SOME SERIOUS CONTINGENCY PLANNING ABOUT WHAT STEPS IT WILL TAKE IF
THE PRESIDENT STEALS THE ELECTION.

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